579 nothing had been done. Probably more than personal motives lay back of the killing, but it was impossible to discover them.

583 Marriage customs are another frequent source of conflicts reaching the mayor. Ordinarily a boy "kidnaps" the girl he is going to marry. The kidnapping is public and usually nothing is done about it, but the boy may be forced to marry the girl if he does not go through with the ceremony in a reasonable time. Occasionally, though, the girl's relatives make so much commotion that the mayor has [683] to act. If the kidnapping has been "legitimate," that is, the boy intends to marry the girl, usually the men participating in the kidnapping are thrown in jail for 2 or 3 hours and released with an admonition, almost certainly given with tongue in cheek.

583 In other cases the matter may become more 684 serious, especially if it is exploited by the girl. One example will illustrate the situation.

A boy stopped to talk with a girl of dubious morals. When he left, she followed him, saying she was going home with him. The boy ran away and hid. Later in the day the girl's parents came to the mayor and claimed the boy had kidnapped the girl. The boy was ordered

[text continues on top of p. 1166]

RELIGION AND CEREMONIAL

771 Religion in Cherán revolves about the church and the formalized practices and beliefs associated with it. In addition, there is a lively belief in witchcraft, plus a body of miscellaneous and unorganized beliefs and customs. In the main, the organized ceremonials, aside from those associated with life crises, which are dealt with in another section, are linked with the church and are group or community affairs. The ceremonials and rituals connected with witchcraft and miscellaneous beliefs are primarily individual in character and are not organized in any way, although there is a certain gradation between the two types of ceremonial with respect to organization.

794 The church ceremonials and rituals are of 796 four types. Central to the system are those church rituals and ceremonies which follow more or less conventional Mexican Catholic lines and are wholly under the direction of the

[text continues on middle of p. 1166]

1:Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34
[p.1166] Sierra Tarascans

583 to marry the girl by a certain date. He failed
684 to do so, as he wished to marry another girl and knew also that the girl laying the charges visited a house of assignation. He was thrown in jail. Later, his mother went his bond and he was released. The boy fled town and had not returned several months later. His mother was put in jail overnight but was released the next day.

123 The preceding discussion is a very unsatisfactory treatment of conflict situations and law.
671 Information on the unformalized personal and familial conflicts is very scanty. Intimate day to day knowledge of households which would produce such information is extremely difficult to secure in Cherán. On the other hand, not enough detailed material was secured on the types of conflicts reaching the *municipio* to make possible any adequate statement regarding legal concepts. In theory, the law in Cherán is Mexican law. Enough examples have perhaps been given to indicate that much of the justice dispensed in the *municipio* is according to informal and generally accepted rules. Only observation of a very large number of cases would permit abstracting the principles on which action is based.

RELIGION AND CEREMONIAL

794 priest. The Mass, Rosary, confession, baptism,
796 confirmation, and so on all fall in this category. A more or less conventional church organization headed by a priest is almost solely responsible for these ceremonies. Associated with
575 this part of the religious organization are the various societies, such as those of the Sacred Heart, Daughters of Mary, Apostles of Saint Joseph, and the Third Order of Saint Francis. Linked with the church organization in part is the *cabildo* or the ačes.

796 Forming a mixture of church and community
527 ceremonials are the fiestas. The organization of fiestas is related to the political organization and, aside from the Mass and strictly church rituals, the fiestas are essentially secular celebrations centering round a religious object.

796 The *mayordomías* are the third important type of religious ceremony and are connected with the church through the *carguero* system and

1:Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34

548 occasionally. Payment, usually 50 centavos, is given to the girls prostituting themselves, part of which is given to the woman who lends her house for the purpose and arranges the meeting.

Despite the existence of prostitution, it is 864 claimed that most young people before marriage have no sexual experience. Girls particularly are believed to be relatively innocent, although obviously all have knowledge of the nature of the sexual act in a setting as full of animals as is Cherán. Boys are believed to be somewhat more sophisticated because, even though they may not have visited houses of prostitution, details are talked about among them. After marriage, aside from the prohibitions on intercourse during pregnancy and confinement and 833 during menstruation, there are no restrictions on sexual relations between husband and wife. There seem to be no ideas about a fixed interval or ideal interval between sexual relations and informants thought relations were "frequent" but would not suggest any time periods. In general, the subject of sex relations proved embarrassing and informants seemed purposely to avoid definite statements.

● 583 The customary preliminary to marriage is for the groom to "steal" (*robar*) his bride. Virtually everyone of the older and the more articulate men in town deprecate the custom and many assert that it is a recent development. Nevertheless, no one could name a time when the custom was not practiced. Moreover, it is to be found in many other Tarascan towns, perhaps in all of them, and is regarded as an old form at Mestizo Chilchota, where most marriages also begin by stealing. Although occasionally the groom asks for the bride instead of stealing her, such cases are exceptional and seem more likely to be the innovation than does the stealing of the bride.

Only on very rare occasions is the bride stolen without her consent. Generally the entire performance, including setting the time and place, has been arranged beforehand between the bride and groom, although it is good form for the girl to struggle or at least to pretend to do so. The groom enlists the [561] cooperation of some of his age mates and they assist in carrying off the girl and in blocking pursuit. The usual time for carrying off a girl is on a Sunday when she comes out of church

583 after the Rosary and when she is usually accompanied only by female relatives. The relatives scream and create a disturbance. The male relatives are summoned at once, either by the female relatives or by any bystander who may be interested enough to do so. The male relatives go in pursuit of the girl and the groom's friends interfere with the chase although they must not use force. They try to block the streets, and sometimes push or trip the male relatives, but they do not hold on to them or strike any blows. If the male relatives of the girl catch the groom before he has gotten the girl to the house of one of his relatives, he must not resist, even though the girl's relatives may abuse him or beat him.

584 Opportunities for courting and for making arrangements are few. The boy may visit the girl's house only on rare occasions, such as the *melebris* before Christmas, although he may occasionally have accompanied his parents on a visit. He also may speak to the girl at the door of her courtyard or exchange a word or two when she is on the streets with her mother carrying water. The best opportunities are the rare occasions when the girl may be allowed on the streets alone in the daytime to visit a relative or to run an errand nearby and especially when she has been allowed to go somewhere with other girls. Sunday afternoon is the main time for courting. A boy uses a [198] special whistle to attract the attention of a girl. If she is with other girls, all stop, and the boy uses signs to indicate which one he wishes to talk to. The other girls go on slowly and the indicated one, if she is interested, lingers behind for a few minutes' conversation.

581 The standards for choice of spouse by a boy are several. A boy wants an attractive-looking girl who is fairly tall and of medium build and who also is industrious and of good family. This means her family is not completely poverty-stricken, her father not a drunkard, and her mother not "perverse" (apparently meaning "immoral"). Also, the girl should be 582 either the same age or a year or two younger 587 than the boy. In a few instances the girl is a year or two older. No cases were reported of widows marrying younger men, but sometimes a widower marries a younger woman. One case cited is a man of over 65 who has a wife

582 587 aged 20. The instance is regarded as exceptional and as undesirable. As a rule, the boy discusses his choice with his parents or with 584 one of his uncles. Although no specific data could be secured on the subject, from the facts 604 that boys at this age seem to be shy with their parents and that the bride is usually taken to the house of an uncle, it seems likely that uncles are consulted on matters of marriage more commonly than are the parents. Some stated there is no preference for maternal or paternal uncles in this connection; others said the girl is taken to a paternal uncle or, lacking an uncle, a paternal aunt.

After a girl is stolen, only on rare occasions 583 does the marriage not follow. Her parents, 522 however much opposed they may be, must always give their consent, for it is very difficult for girls to get married if they have been stolen and then returned home. As Agustín put it, "they have to wait for a sucker" in order to get married. A youth marrying such a girl is the butt of teasing by all his age mates, even by persons who do not even know his name. In the one case known of a young man who married a girl who had previously been stolen by someone else, the youth is subjected to so much teasing that he is virtually a recluse, either staying in his house when home or working by himself in the woods.

583 It is generally felt that the municipal authorities should force a youth to marry a girl after [606] he has stolen her. If they do not, the authorities are always suspected of receiving bribes to overlook the case. Informants best acquainted with customary viewpoints, though, stated that the municipal authorities are not required to act unless the parents of the groom make the first formal visit to the girl's parents. In this case the municipal authorities are expected to force completion of the marriage. In actual fact the municipal authorities bring some pressure to bear on youths if the girl's parents lodge a complaint.

The following accounts of stealing girls give additional light on the procedures. The first account was written by Agustín Rangel.

When I first met the groom it was about 2 p. m. (on a Sunday) at the corner of Damas Gambe's store. We walked around for a while and when we were coming down the highway he told me he was going to steal a

● 583 girl that afternoon after the Rosario. The corner of Morelos and Galeana was where the boy and girl had the place arranged for the stealing. When we knew that the Rosario was just about to be finished, we came down the highway to the plaza where we sat down at the municipal offices. Then the people began to come out from the Rosario and were called back by the priest to move the rocks in back of the priest's house. The girl's father called us to help move the rocks but instead we moved over to the corner of Morelos and Ocampo where we sat and waited until they finished.

After a little the girl came by and she looked at us. As she turned the corner up Morelos, she got ahead of her folks about 10 feet and just stood there. Then she turned back and looked at us to see if we were going to do anything. She was with five women. Knowing that we were not going to do anything, she evened up with the rest of her folks. Then we followed her; we went straight and she turned the corner of Morelos and Galeana. Then we ran so that we could beat her to the corner of Hidalgo and Arista and we stood there until she came.

When she came, the groom stood in the middle of the street and two of us stood on each side of the street and the other stood a little ways from the corner. When the girl passed us, the groom grabbed her by the arm and I took the other arm on the other side. The mother just said, "Maria Purisima, where do you take my daughter? Why do you take her and who are you?" We just ran to beat everything. When we were crossing the bridge (to Paricutin), one of the kids hollered, "Hurry up, because the father is just in back of you."

When I turned to look back the girl's father was just about half a block behind us. Then we separated at the street junction across the bridge. The boy and girl took the upper road and we went on the lower road. We just walked a little ways to where it was dark and changed blankets. Then we walked back as if we were innocent bystanders. We saw the girl's father after the boy and girl. We just made out we didn't know anything and said, "I wonder who was the kid who took the girl." Then we said, "Let's follow them," and we did. When we reached the corner of Madero and Salazar the girl's father was madder than a wet hen. He was saying, "If I ever catch the guys who did it, I will kill them," swearing to beat anything. Then he left and we followed him up Salazar and past the calvary to his house.

His wife was waiting for him in the doorway. His wife then said, "Didn't you catch the boys who stole my daughter?" He answered, "No, I didn't catch them. How do you expect me to catch them when I didn't know who they were?" They argued for a while in the doorway and then went inside. We came back to the saloon and when we got back they were already drunk (the groom and another helper). Then we went home. We were just afraid that if the father knew who we were he might call us in at the mayor's office and get us put in jail overnight.

1:Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34
Sierra Tarascans

[p. 180a]

583 The boy and girl had agreed to go out together since the last time they talked together. The father was chasing us because he was trying to get the girl before she had reached the boy's house. The girl was not taken to the house of the boy when we stole her but to the house of one of his relatives. If the father caught up with us, we would have to take what was coming to us and not fight back. Some boys tried to make a blockade on the road when the father was chasing. He had three friends with him and so he got by.

The following day Agustín's fears were realized; he was summoned to the mayor's office and shut up in jail from about 5 until 8 o'clock. Then, since it was a first offense, he was let out (although he had helped steal a number of other girls) with the warning that next time it would be a couple of days. The mayor also scolded the boys severely, pointing out that several people had been killed stealing girls; in fact, the implication was that he had put them in jail for their own protection, not because there was anything wrong with stealing the girl. As during the winter scarcely a Sunday passes without a girl being stolen in the plaza, the mayor's shock could not have been great.

Another less typical case involved a girl who had three suitors. The three suitors agreed to steal her and make her choose between them. If she refused to choose, then one of them, José H———, was to take her. The aid of three other youths was enlisted to guard all the approaches to the plaza in case the girl tried to flee. The plan fell through, because the girl did not come to church as she had promised.

The following week José made signals to a girl in Paricutin that he wanted to talk with her. She was with two other girls, carrying water. She stood and talked for a while and José then started home. After a block or two he discovered the girl following him. He made a circuit beside the *barranca*, but she still followed. He waited for her and asked where she was going. She replied, "I am going with you." On this, José ran down into the *barranca*, followed it down to the plain, and after a very long circuit, returned home. He had scarcely arrived when the police summoned him to the mayor's office. There was the father of the girl, accusing José of stealing his daughter. José denied the accusation and explained, but he had no witnesses and the girl insisted. The mayor ordered José to marry the girl; he

1:Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34
Sierra Tarascans
[p. 180 b]

583 refused, as he was interested in the girl he had hoped to steal the previous Sunday and the present girl he knew visited one of the houses of assignation. José was then put in jail, but when his mother stood responsible for him he was let out in a couple of days. The girl's mother went around town talking about the wrong that had been done, while José went around town telling everyone bad things about the girl. Eventually José had to run away and no one knew where he had gone.

Normally, sexual relations are begun between the bride and groom soon after she is stolen. [608] Permission of the girl's baptismal godfather (and perhaps the godfather of confirmation) should be sought and is usually given; to refuse might cause hard feeling. Cases were cited where the godfather and the boy's parents became very angry with each other over a refusal. On the other hand, evidently the boy is stimulated to accumulate the property necessary to hold the wedding if sex relations are not permitted.

The stealing of a girl sets in motion a complex series of events constituting perhaps the most complicated aspect of Cherán culture.

The following account of marriage is one written by Pedro Chávez. Parts in brackets represent additional comments made by Sr. Chávez on other occasions or data gathered from other sources. All the features of the wedding were verified by observation and utilization of other sources of information.

A TARASCAN WEDDING

Marriage among the Tarascans of the town of Cherán embraces many points of great importance. In the first place, it is now a custom that the groom, when he desires to enter into marriage, steals the girl. This theft consists of catching her and carrying her off forcibly or, sometimes, willingly without force. But in either case, as much in the first instance as in the second, the bride goes in accordance with an agreement made in advance and the action is merely feigned by the two.

585 When the theft of the bride is completed [by taking the girl to the house of an uncle or other relative or, more rarely, to the house of the groom], the parents of the groom proceed to the house of the bride and appear before her parents. This act is called the puátperankua or "the pardon." It should be taken into account that in order to present themselves before the parents of the bride, the parents of the groom must take a person called t'aɪepiti diósa uandári [who is a professional

1:Beals E-5 (1940-1941)1946 NU34 Tarasco NU34

585 almost as complex, particularly if it is the first
587 marriage of one of the parties. A widow or widower is not expected to marry for 6 months after the death of his or her spouse, but marriage usually occurs soon after that time. Marriage is regarded as the normal state for an adult, and one who does not marry is thought to be queer. "Here they believe that a man without a woman or a woman without a man cannot be either man or woman and they are not respected." Moreover, life is very difficult for the widow or widower. The woman has difficulty getting her fields properly cultivated, even though she may own sufficient property. A man, unless he has relatives who will take him in, also has great difficulty in getting food, for no man knows how to cook. Women do not wish to take a widower as a boarder, fearing either that he will make some attempt on their virtue or that their reputation will suffer. Husbands are also much opposed to such an arrangement, so the widower must marry, if he is to eat decently.

583 In Mestizo Chilchota, Rendón found many similarities with the Cherán wedding customs. The bride is sometimes stolen, sometimes not. If stolen and then not married, the girl finds marriage difficult, and mothers will not let their daughters talk to such a girl. Chilchota residents assert that in the Tarascan villages of La Cañada this is not the case, but such evidence from Mestizos is notoriously unreliable.

Generally the bride is stolen. In Chilchota, Rendón definitely secured the impression that this custom is older than asking for the bride. The bride is taken to the house of a friend or to the godparent of baptism of the bride. According to some women marrying in this way, the marriage was not consummated until after the wedding ceremonies; others said they had relations with their husbands the day they were stolen. If the girl is asked for, rather than stolen, the relatives of the groom take mescal and cigarettes when they visit the bride's parents. They are accompanied by an old man skilled in such matters.

585 The wedding takes place traditionally in the house of the groom, but among the "snobs" it takes place in the house of the bride. Guests take a kilo of salt, a kilo of chiles (preferably dry chiles which are more expensive), several